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TAGS: [CM](#) [KCOR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CAMEROON: AMBASSADOR MEETS PRIME MINISTER INONI

Classified By: Ambassador Janet E. Garvey for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an April 29 meeting with Ambassador, Cameroonian Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni said he had completed a list of members for Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) and was advocating for an extension of the exploration license for US-led mining company Hydromine. He alleged the President was frustrated with the Minister of Justice's efforts to recover overseas proceeds from corruption and insisted he was uninvolved in the corruption-tainted purchase of a presidential airplane in 2004. Ambassador noted that the USG regretted President Biya's decision to eliminate presidential term limits. End summary.

Political Developments

¶2. (C) Ambassador told the PM that Washington regretted President Biya's decision to move forward with a constitutional amendment eliminating presidential term limits. We object to the President's characterization of term limits as undemocratic, she added. Inoni made no response. Ambassador expressed our continued concerns about the GRC's closing of VOA affiliate Magic FM radio. Inoni replied simply that they had not paid their taxes. Ambassador made the point that other radio stations had not paid taxes and that Magic FM appeared to be singled out.

¶3. (C) Inoni said he had completed a well-balanced list of members for Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), working closely with the Commonwealth. The list would be presented to the president soon. Ambassador noted that we hope not to see another CONAC (the Cameroon anti-corruption agency which has yet to be active). The PM agreed that CONAC has been ineffective, headed by someone who "you can't trust but can't get rid of."

Corruption

¶4. (C) Inoni expected more corruption-related arrests in the near future. The President is unhappy with Minister of Justice Amadou Ali, who led people to believe information about overseas proceeds from corruption would be easy to obtain through the services of high-priced consultants, and who has so far not delivered, according to Inoni. Inoni said he was not worried about corruption allegations related to the 2004 purchase of the Albatross presidential airplane. Inoni claimed that he had provided President Biya with evidence that Inoni (who was Assistant Secretary General at the time of the purchase) was not involved in this deal.

Hydromine

¶5. (C) The PM said the Minister of Mines had sat on a letter for two weeks extending an exploration license for the U.S.-led Hydromine bauxite mining project. Inoni said he and senior officials in the presidency have been pressuring the

ministry to send the letter to Hydromine; he blamed rival Alucam, which "doesn't want the country to move forward." (Note: post has continued to advocate heavily in Hydromine's favor over the past month, raising the issue of the license extension directly with the Presidency, senior Ministry of Mines officials, and repeatedly with the Prime Minister. Despite our efforts and the promises of our interlocutors, Hydromine has not yet received an extension on an exploration license that expired at the end of March. End note.)

Food Security

¶6. (SBU) Ambassador raised food security, which Inoni agreed was a major issue in Cameroon. He noted the large number of small farms and land holdings and said there was some concern in the government about whether to encourage biofuels.

Comment

¶7. (C) Inoni was relaxed and spoke at length. He was surprisingly forthcoming on corruption and the Albatross affair (which is increasingly in the news, implicating him). While friendly toward the United States, Inoni has not always delivered on his offers to be helpful (for example, on Hydromine). He tops the list of officials rumored to be on the chopping block for the next Cabinet shuffle, which the political rumor mill says could come at any time.
GARVEY